

Hi my name is _____ and this is the 8th principle minute.

Unitarian Universalist around the country have committed to dismantling racism beginning with their own practices, their identity and their own stories.

Microaggressions and Congregational Racism

When talking about anti-racist work “microaggression” is used so often these days that there is beginning to be an assumption that everyone understands the meaning of the term. It’s worth taking a few moments to define it. From the UUA’s web page about hospitality and inclusion;

Microaggression is a term coined by psychologist Dr. Derald Wing Sue and it refers to a comment or behavior that demeans someone because of their culturally marginalized identity.

Microaggressions are often unintentional but can cause serious psychological and spiritual harm over time—the effect known as “death by a thousand paper cuts.”

Microaggressions are so insidious that victims internalize the subconscious message and do not even realize that they have been wronged, especially when they are received from someone they trust in a space they consider safe.

In fact, well meaning people, in an effort to be welcoming and inclusive, may unknowingly use microaggressions when speaking with BIPOC or other marginalized people. It’s important to understand that not everyone will react the same way to any particular statement or speaker and the perspective that matters is that of the person receiving harm. Here are a few examples that might be heard at coffee hour at a UU congregation:

- “Where are you really from?”
- “You must be new to Unitarian Universalism.”
- “You speak English so well!”
- “Welcome! Do you want to join the Racial Justice Team?”
- “Ooh, I just have to touch your child’s hair.”

This is an area in which we will need to delve into this in detail. Over the coming weeks and months we will have opportunities to learn and grow as a community.

If we add the 8th principle to the 7, we need to look at our own practices, identity, and stories with a new lens to dismantle the racism in ourselves and

our institutions. Together we will continue to educate ourselves and discuss what it means to develop a culture of being accountably anti-racist.